

The Pastoral Care.

7657
A
S E R M O N

PREACHED at the
O R D I N A T I O N

Of the REVEREND

Mr. *Michael Pope* and Mr. *John Whittel*

A T

Leather-Lane, Hatton-Garden:

OCTOBER 30, 1746.

By *JOHN MILNER*, D. D.

2 Cor. xii. 15.

Δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν.

Published at the Request of the Ministers, and others who
heard it.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White Hart* in *Cheapside*,
near *Mercer's Chapel*; J. WAUGH, at the *Turk's*
Head in *Gracechurch Street*; R. DAVIS, at the Corner
of *Sackville Street, Piccadilly*; and J. HIGHMORE,
under the *Royal Exchange*. MDCCXLVI.



44

PHILIP. II. 20.

I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your State.

BENEVOLENCE is an *inclination* and *propensity* to seek the welfare and Happiness of others : and it is the glory of our Religion to represent it as a *Divine* and *Human Excellence*. *Faith, Hope* and *Charity* enter essentially into the *Christian temper* ; but, in point of excellence and duration, *the greatest of these is Charity*^a. Take away this, and the *profession* will sink in its gracefulness ; and the *practice*, in its noblest pleasures. And consequently *Christianity*, as a Scheme of *Benevolence*, must appear the *perfection* of all Religion. Every kind affection, every tender sentiment, with which Nature and Reason can inspire us, are here exalted ; and form that *Temper*, which conduces to the improving and accomplishing our own, and others happiness ; and is truly *Divine*.

The *Apostle Paul* would insinuate himself into his friends by the charms of this *Benevolence*. How does his Heart glow with love ? How kind his language, and how moving his address ?

A 2

In

* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

In his bonds he is mindful of the *Philippians*, sends them this affectionate letter, and intimates his design of sending *Timothy* to enquire into their State. Not merely to carry his *compliments*, but inform him of their *Stedfastness* and *progress* in the doctrine of *Christ*. This was speaking to them like a true friend, and making that profession good, which you have in the beginning of this Epistle, *God is my Record how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ*^b.

To procure the greater credit to his messenger the *Apostle* gives this amiable character of him, every way worthy of a Gospel Minister, *I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your State.*—*ισόθυχον* like affected; “one
 “ of like temper, and disposition with myself,
 “ in promoting the welfare of immortal souls.
 “ *q. d.* You know how I have laboured
 “ amongst you; how solicitous I have been to
 “ lead you to Christ and Heaven; and been
 “ ready to postpone my own Ease, and convenience, and even life itself^c, to serve you. In
 “ my present circumstances I can testify my tender
 “ and affectionate concern no better way than
 “ by sending one to you, who is *alter idem*,
 “ the same as myself^d.—*ὅστις γνησίως μεριμνήσας*
 “ who will *sincerely* care for you^e. In him you
 “ will observe the sincere, honest man; that
 “ will

^b Chap. i. 8. ^c Ver. 17. ^d 1 Cor. xvi. 10. Ver. 22.

^e So the adnoun, used substantively, is rendered, *τὸ τῆς ἐμετέρας ἀγάπης γνήσιον* the Sincerity of your love, 2 Cor. viii. 8.

“ will consult your *interest*, more than your
 “ *humour*; and scorn either to *flatter*, or *deceive*
 “ you. No——Religion and its noble views will
 “ be the chief object of his attention and zeal.
 “ —— τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν your *affairs*; that I might bear
 “ of your *affairs*, that ye stand fast in one Spirit,
 “ with one mind, striving together for the faith
 “ of the Gospel^f. This is what I am solicitous,
 “ for, to promote your faith, encourage your
 “ mutual affections, and improve your joy. If
 “ there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if
 “ any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the
 “ Spirit, if any bowels and mercies^g, be united,
 “ be steadfast, be growing in religion.”

It was not their worldly interest, their wealth, honour and riches, which he was so much concerned for; objects too low and mean to be proportional to the *ministerial Character*: but virtue, peace, and happiness, the glory of the Redeemer, and the good of Souls. In many passages he sufficiently explains what he meant by their affairs, the *moral State* of their Souls, their *everlasting concerns*. He considered the temptations and trials they were now exposed to, and therefore is jealous, lest he might run and labour in vain^h. It is as if he had said,
 “ a good

^f Chap. i. 27. ^g Chap. ii. 1, 2, 3.

^h These following passages are very expressive of his meaning——For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ, with an intense degree of true Christian love. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in Knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the

“ a good work was begun among you, I desire to know whether it goes on ; and whether you have made any advances in the Divine Life. You embraced the Gospel of Christ, which I preached, with great readiness of Mind. I should with pleasure receive the account of your firmness and constancy in it, and that you have *lost no ground* since I left you.”

You have then, in this commendation of *Timothy* to the *Philippians*, the true character of a Gospel Minister. His governing principle is LOVE TO SOULS : his great concern is to promote their HOLINESS and EVERLASTING HAPPINESS, by the power and grace of Christ.

On this occasion it will be justly expected that I should say something of the *Pastoral Office* ; but waving all other considerations of it, I chuse to recommend it as an *Office of Charity and Benevolence*. When Love governs our Hearts and labours, it will, in the truest manner, *magnify our Office*, and add a *lustre* and *dignity* to it, beyond the power of robes,

the fruits of righteousness, with all the moral virtues, which are by Jesus Christ, commanded by his Authority, assisted by his grace, and accepted through his meditation, unto the glory and praise of God. Chap. i. 8, — 11. — *Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, that, whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs* [τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν,] *that ye stand fast &c.* ib. ver. 27. — *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Among whom shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, discovering its excellency and power in your Christian conversation.* Chap. ii. 15, 16.

Robes, Titles, and the lowest Reverences. Where this love prevails, our *Honour* will be to be *useful*: and the great *Contention*, who shall do most *Good*. Such was *Paul's*; such was *Timothy's* Character; let us desire, *my Brethren*, to be like affected and disposed, then we shall live to some valuable purpose, and certainly finish our ministry with Joy——From the Words I shall take occasion to illustrate and improve this single argument.

That the Principle, which should constantly influence and govern a Minister of Jesus Christ, is a sincere love to Souls.

The *Argument* is plain, but, I hope, not unpopular; common, but not for that reason of little moment: as *plain* as *common* as it may be thought, it is the reviving of this *Publick Spirit*, that will be, under God, one means of retrieving the honour and power of Religion; and render the *Pastoral Office* a *Publick Blessing*. This is the Subject, I would now recommend to your Attention. I would not branch out the *General method* beyond this single point, that I might interfere, as little as possible, with the EXHORTATION, which you will expect in the *close* of this Service.——In support of it, let us enter into the following Reflections.

FIRST.——The *Gospel* we preach is repugnant to *corrupt nature*; and therefore to recommend it in an affectionate manner, would be
the

the most likely way to procure it attention and Success.—Men have their favourite prejudices and passions, which will disrelish many parts of our messages. The view we must give Sinners of themselves will by no means please them. The deformities of Sin; the terrors of God they suppress the thoughts of, as much as possible. To call them to *Repentance* is to revive their guilt and fear, to persuade them to renounce their corrupt inclinations and desires, is the same, as to persuade them to fall out with themselves. This of consequence must create a prejudice against us; yes——this is the true source of all that *malignity*, which has ever appeared against a *Gospel Ministry*. Carnal Men love their evil deeds too well to part with them, and will certainly hate those, who have the *honesty* and *courage* to reprove them.

Many times we shall be obliged to accuse the *weakness* and *folly* of mankind; expose *wrong characters* and *delusive hopes*. It is true we speak in the greatest name, and lay before men the concerns of *Everlasting Life* and *Death*: but then those things being distant will lose much of their force upon those, who *walk by sight*. Something *present* and *sensible* will be necessary to engage a patient attention. Can we do better, in such a case, to secure our esteem with them, than to let them see that we love them; that we desire above all things their *comfort* and *Salvation*; that we accuse them without *anger*, and expose those weaknesses without a *malevolent Spirit*.

When

When the *Exhortation* proceeds from charity, and integrity of Heart, it will more easily and effectually insinuate itself. And; *let me say*, without some appearance of this temper, our reproofs will be called *peevishness*; and our censures the effect of *Pride*. It is *Love* must smoothe our way to the Hearts of men, and abate the *Severity* of Counsel: it is *Love* must reconcile them to hear unpleasing truths, and convince them, when we probe the wound, that it is with a friendly hand, to heal it the sooner. However, whether men are pleased, or not, we must do our duty *faithfully*; with such firmness of mind, with such freedom of Speech, that they may know their Sins, and the blood of Souls may never lie against us. —So when our *Saviour* pronounced the tremendous doom of *Jerusalem*, it was with compassion and tenderness; with a generous flow of tears ⁱ.

SECONDLY. —The *Loss*, the *destruction* of an *immortal Soul*, is a case that should sensibly affect us. A just sense of this *loss* is enough to move all that is compassionate in us. We see what evils *Sin* brings upon human life; how it arms mens passions against one another; how it destroys *order*, *equity*, *peace* and *friendship*; the pleasure and support of Society. But what are those *evils* to the *ruin* of the last day, when the Soul will be lost to *light* and *comfort*; to *virtue* and *happiness*: when it will be banished from the reviving presence of God,

B

and

and thrust into perpetual scenes of misery ; when its own conscious guilt will be a source of torment ; its own reflections, desires and enflamed passions will make it a theatre of horror, from which there will be no retreat or remedy. *This wrath of God is revealed from Heaven^k*, and therefore not to be *doubted* ; and by one, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to prevent it, and therefore not to be *slighted*.

When the *Persian Monarch* viewed his numerous army, consisting of some hundred thousand men ; he was touched, and wept at the thought, that most of them would be dead in a few years ; and he found it true in a few months, by the slaughter of war. Can we look over our Assemblies with an *affected coldness*, when we believe not most, but *all of them must stand before the judgment seat of Christ* : an awful enlightened Tribunal, where *real Characters* will be discovered, and an *irreversible sentence* be pronounced, such as will affect them for EVER. How anxious should we be, lest any of our Friends, any of our care, should miscarry. It is their duty *to work out their Salvation with fear and trembling^l*. We cannot but share with them in the concern ; *and fear lest a promise being left of entering into REST, they should seem to come short of it^m*.

Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we should persuade and beseech men, to fly from the wrath to come. We should hasten them to escape out of

^k Rom. i. 18.^l Philip. ii. 12.^m Heb. iv. 1.

of a *sinful State*, as the *Angel* did *Lot* out of *Sodom*, and for the same reason, *because there is a Storm of fire and brimstone coming down*°. Others may plead ignorance; want of skill or time to acquaint themselves with those things. How far their *plea* will be allowed, is not my business at present to enquire. But by our *profession* and *office* we are supposed to be well instructed in those affairs, and to believe the important issues of life. We are to communicate and impress this *Knowledge*, and can we do it without emotion? Can we behold the *trifling*, the *indifference*, the *fatal security* of the world about us, without a *SIGH*?—Behold multitudes *perishing* under a profession; *dying* amidst the remedies of Life; *lost* under the seal of *Baptism*, without a *TEAR*?

There is certainly a good deal of *tendernefs* wrought into an *human heart*, and can there be an object of greater distress to affect it, than a *Soul* in the broad way to destruction: yea many crowding on in that way, without apprehending their danger. *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat* P.

There is *ONE* dead in *trespasses and Sin*, regardless of every admonition; and calmly settled in his security. Fain would I awaken proper reflections in that *Soul*, and give him a sight of the dreadful misery he is on the brink of. *Oh that God would cloath his word with Salvation*, and, what is spoken to the ear, direct

B 2

effectu-

° Gen. xix. 16.

P Mat. vii. 13.

effectually to the heart!——There is ANOTHER *whose heart is hard as a rock*; proof against conviction, and determined in the way to ruin. Could *tears* soften it, and make it susceptible of good impressions, I could wish a perpetual Stream. *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the Slain of my people*^a.——There is a THIRD *earthly, proud, sensual*, who desires no good but what is present; who dreads no loss, but in the confinement of his desires, and in the decay of his Senses. How shall I convince him of *nobler ends* of Being, and *fuller prospects* of Happiness? Oh for the Eloquence of an *Angel*, and the rapture of a *Paul*, to describe the *virtuous and rational pleasures* of the upper world, and charm him to his duty, as the way to this happiness!

Why, *my Brethren*, are we not affected in some such manner? The object is an *immortal Soul*, likely to be lost, *lost* to Virtue and Happiness; *lost* for ever. Did we see *temporal life* in such hazzard, we should naturally rush into *Surprise and pity*, and reach out our hand to him, that is falling †. Is not this in itself, and its consequences a more important case? The *loss* of a Soul is full of horror; *eternal perdition*, beyond the power of imagination and fear, *dreadful*. How painful the thought, *what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*^r.

THIRDLY.

^a Jer. ix. 1.
^r Mat. xvi. 26.

† Cadenti porrigo dextram.

THIRDLY.—The greatness of our reward challenges from us this affectionate care of Souls. Our Saviour's Kingdom is not of this World^c, so neither is his Treasury. He has great things in store for those that love him; for those that bring others to love him. They are future indeed; but then their immensity makes amends for that distance, and their Eternity will fully recompence patience and hope in waiting for them.

All the Friends of Jesus will be happy in his enjoyment and love: but the instruments of his providence and grace are encouraged to expect a superior and exalted Happiness. Those, whom we build up in faith and holiness, will be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord^c. Whilst we are adding crowns to others, we are adding jewels of the richest lustre to our own. For they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the Stars for ever, and ever^u. The glory of Christ second appearance will be distinguishing, and the ministers of his Kingdom will have a share of it derived to them. For when the chief Shepherd shall appear, then shall ye receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away^w.

Are those his Encouragements, and shall not we believe and trust them? Is this the divine word, and shall we give it little or no credit: a word that is firmer than the whole frame of Nature? Heaven and Earth may pass away; and all the glory of man fade as the grass, but the word

^c John xviii. 36.
^w 1 Pet. v. 4.

^u 1 Thess. ii. 19.

^u Dan. xii. 3.

word of the Lord endureth for ever^x. This is the word we *preach*, and it should be the word that we *trust*. Would it be just to take the *prize*, without *running* for it; or expect the *reward* without the *labour*? If not——then it becomes us to be zealous in this work, and to be very earnest in persuading men to be *reconciled to God*. Our expectations are great, so should our diligence and faithfulness be. It should appear, that we have duely considered the messages we are to bring, and skilfully prepared them, with God's blessing, to *move* and *persuade*: and that we are warmed into the same resolution, as the Apostle, *to spend and be spent very gladly for mens Souls*^y.

FOURTHLY.——We have the *greatest* and *best examples* to lead the way, in this concern for mankind.——The ETERNAL GOD, *supreme* in all perfections; the *most excellent* of all excellent Beings, the *wisest* of all intelligent Natures; who wants no contributions from his creatures, to add to his *greatness* and *happiness*: He condescends to express the *importunity* of a *Friend*, and the *affections* of a *Father*, in seeking our good. What he commands by his Authority, he sweetens and endears by his love. With what *divine pathos* is that message delivered? *As I live saith the Lord God*, [the asseveration intimates its certainty and importance,]

^x 1 Pet. i. 25. ^y 2 Cor. xii. 15. *I will very gladly spend and be spent for your Souls*, so it is in the Greek. Vid. *Motto* in the Title.

ance,] *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, q. d. “ I have not originally in myself, “ any *satisfaction* that can arise from *ruin* ; any “ *glory* that can result from the *destruction* of my “ creatures. I made them to be happy, and “ furnished the creation about them with a variety of blessings, to contribute to that design. “ I have manifested myself to them in all ages, “ to deliver them out of a state of *darkness* and “ *corruption*. And therefore might well assure “ them, that my design ; ” *my desire is that the wicked turn from their evils ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel*². How wonderful is the *intreaty* of a God ? How astonishing is this *divine importunity* ? His *Angels*, his *Providences*, his *Messages* are all charged with the same design.

THE BLESSED REDEEMER is a most affectionate *Lover of Souls*. It was *Love* that brought him down to tabernacle in our flesh ; to *live* for our instruction, and *die* for our sins. It was *Love* that engaged him to be *unwearied* in labour, and *invincible* in suffering. Not honour, and riches, and power could raise a spark of *ambition* in his soul. A nobler design possessed him, namely, to repair the ruins of the *moral world* ; to *seek and to save those that were lost*. This he made his *daily work* : this he found his *chiefest pleasure*. *Success* gave him joy : *obstruction* from the hardness of mens hearts, made him grieve.—Should not the *Disciple* be as his *Master* ;

² Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Master ; and the Servant as his Lord^b, earnest and affectionate ? Are we to beseech men in Christ stead^c ; and ought we not to do it in Christ Spirit, with tenderness and love. How illustrious this part of his character ; Love to Souls ! Love so active, so intense, so unlimited and divine, as to exceed all our comparisons and thoughts.

St. PAUL was animated by the same generous motives : was active and zealous for the good of Souls. When he thought of his own Country-men, their blindness and obstinacy, Nature and Grace both conspired to raise and enflame his affections towards them. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved^d. So strong and flowing was his passion for their happiness, that he could express it no other way than by an Hyperbole. I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my Brethren, my Kinsmen according to the flesh^e. We were willing, says he to the Thessalonians, to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only ; but also our own Souls, because ye were dear unto us^f. And to the Philippians just before the text, and if I be offered upon the Sacrifice and Service of your Faith, though my blood was to be the drink-offering to accompany the Sacrifice and Service of your Faith, I rejoyce^g. Not bonds or imprisonments, not the frowns of power or the forms of death could check the generous Flame. Neither count*
I my

^b Mat. x. 24, 25. ^c 2 Cor. v. 20. ^d Rom. x. 1.
^e Rom. ix. 3. ^f 1 Thess. ii. 8. ^g Ver. 17.

I my life dear, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received^h.

Though we cannot reach those *sublime heights* of zeal, we should keep them in our *Eye*, and our *Eye* should affect our *hearts*. We should desire to follow a *Paul*, a person of distinguished honour and grace in the *Church*. We should endeavour to be like our *master* in the most *amiable part* of his Character; and imitate the most *Perfect Being* in mercy and goodness. And whilst we are doing this, *Experience* will convince us, that we are conforming to the true measures of *Duty*, *Honour*, and *Happiness*.

FIFTHLY.—Such an *affectionate care* for *Souls* would facilitate our *work*, and derive a good influence upon our own *Temper* in the conduct of it. This certainly must be a *right principle of action*, which promotes, and prepares for the *great ends*, we ought to have in view, *the glory of God and the good of Souls*. It doth this in several respects, *for instance*,

1.) It will give us the most *exalted pleasure* in the midst of labours. How pleasing must it be to think, we are serving those we love; and in their best interest too, their eternal happiness? We can expect nothing less than to be fully employed. Those that are *weak* must be treated with *gentleness*; and those that *oppose themselves*, with *meekness*. The *ignorant* require *compassion*; the *dejected*, *comfort*. And all are to be encouraged in the knowledge and
C
way

way of Salvation. We can propose nothing less than *to spend and be spent in this service*ⁱ. And generally the *Flame of life* languishes sooner in us, than other men.

There is nothing so likely to keep up our strength and chearfulness, as *love*. For where this exerts itself, it engages the force of the *animal passions* and *affections*, as well as the *intellectual*, and by that means increases its own *moment*. Hence it is, that *love* is so active and enterprizing a passion: is able to raise us above our *infirmities*, and turn a *labour* into delight, — *Labor ipse voluptas*; — or to arm us with patience and resolution against *real difficulties*. If we *love* immortal Souls we shall bethink no pains to secure their *happiness*, and even forego our own *ease* to promote their *safety*. This is its power in common life.

2.) It will make us *patient* under any unkind treatment, or neglect, we may possibly meet with; and *the Servant of the Lord must be gentle to all men* — *patient*^k. Some *little incidents* in life; or, *perhaps*, some better acquaintance with our *imperfections*, may lower us in the Esteem of our friends. But if they see, at the same time, that we *love* them, and that our *principal view* is to do them good, it must incline them to *candour*, and to put the most *favourable construction* on our actions.

3.) This *affectionate temper* would render our *other qualifications* more *amiable*, *important* and *useful*. It would be a kind of *seasoning* to preserve them

ⁱ 2 Cor. xii. 15.

^k 2 Tim. ii. 24.

them from *corruption* : preserve *wisdom* from degenerating into *craft*, and *eloquence* from sinking into *flattery* ; prevent *Learning* from claiming *undue honours*, and *superior Credit* from projecting schemes of *interest* or *power*. Thus it would preserve *great abilities* in their *integrity*, *honour* and *usefulness* ; as well as throw out a *mantle* to cover *lesser faults*.

4.) It would always have this good Effect upon us, to keep the great ENDS of our ministry in view. *We are to watch for souls as those that must give an account*¹. Their safety and happiness are really intrusted with us, and will in great measure be affected by the *manner of our address*. We dare not, in such a Trust, be negligent, curious, trifling, or *daub with untempered mortar*^m. The saving of Men's souls should be ever uppermost in our thoughts. This should be the spirit and turn of every *Sermon* we preach, and of every *prayer* we offer up.

We are to declare to our People *the whole counsel of God*ⁿ ; his *reconcilableness* to man, the wisdom and goodness of this dispensation ; his sovereign act of *indemnity* and *free pardon* of *past sins*^o, offered on the condition of Faith only, and the consequent admission of such as *believe*, to the Privileges and Blessings of the *Gospel State* ; his absolute, invariable *injunction* of *Holiness* and *virtue*, in connection with this *faith*, and the consequent admission of such as are *holy*, to the privileges and Blessings of the *heavenly State*.

C 2

¹ Heb. xiii. 7. ^m Ezek. xxii. 28. ⁿ Acts xx. 27.
^o Rom. iii. 24, 25, &c.

State. We are to convince them of the *necessity, propriety and excellency* of the *mediator*; and the influences of his *Spirit*: to offer every consideration that will expose the *evil and danger of sin*; or recommend the amiableness and obligation of *Holiness*.

We are to shew them particularly, that *Holiness* is the proper fruit of *Faith*, and the genuine temper of *real Religion*; and that it is *impossible* to be happy without an *inward disposition* for happiness. No *Church* upon earth; no *forms* of Knowledge or piety; no *use* of sacraments; no *reliance* upon *God's* mercy, or *Christ's* merits; no flattering pretences whatever, can give us any solid hope of Heaven without *Holiness*. It is this *rectitude, purity, and integrity* of heart and life, which all the *positive* and *instrumental* parts of Religion look to as their *end*; and which every Christian should make the *constant object* of his desires and endeavours, *in dependance on the Grace of the Redeemer*.

Unless we press forward *this end*, we shall not shew a proper regard to our *instructions*; nor discover our *love* to Christ and our *faithfulness* to the souls of men.—If instead of this, we indulge to *curiosities* of Explication, and appear in the *pulpit* to be admired for *fine turns* of thought and expression. If our chief concern be, to point men's *Zeal* to the distinctions of *a party*, and flatter their prejudices: what is all this but *digression* from our main purpose. But is this doing our *master's work*, or our *own*;

is

is this *edifying the body of Christ*, and grasping souls for heaven? When we look over our *Assemblies* let us freely admit the thought, "*perhaps* there are some before me who are *secure*, some *doubting*, some *declining*, some that may be *damning* themselves: and should I prophesy *smooth things*; should I forbear to shew them their sin and danger?" *Love to souls* would engage us constantly to urge on the great design of Religion. The reason why men are no better, is not, because they do not *know* their duty; but because they have no mind to *practise* it. We should therefore reduce all our speculations to *practice*, and support that with all *persuasion, importunity and fervour*.

5.) It would procure to us *Reputation* and *Esteem*, more than any thing in the world. The *dignity, value, and support* of every Character is its *usefulness*; and to love the souls of men is to desire in the noblest manner to be *useful*.

Various schemes have been formed to aggrandize the ministerial Character, such as that of a *lineal Succession* from the Apostles; the *validity* of ordinances in one particular fashion only; the *indelible Character*; more *sublime* and *refined* notions of Religion, *Titles, Robes, &c.*

—There is a shorter and truer way than all this, to rise in the *esteem* of mankind, and that is to let them see, that our *hearts desire and prayer is, that they may be saved*: that we breathed the Primitive Apostolic Spirit, *I seek not yours, but you^s*. This would make *small abilities*

abilities important; and *great ones* shine: because both so immediately applied to the noblest charity in the world, *the Salvation of Souls*.

From those considerations, *I hope*, it appears that an *affectionate concern* for the salvation of souls is not only an *indispensible duty*; but a *Virtue* of the first rank, and the most *essential quality* of a *Christian Pastor*. This is *Dignity*; this is true *Greatness of Mind*, which extends itself to the wants of others, rejoices in communication, and scorns the selfish view of engrossing all happiness to itself.—Yes, this is a *temper Godlike* and truly *Divine*. I proceed now to the

A P P L I C A T I O N

Of this subject. And if this is not only a *right principle* of action; but highly conducive to the *success* of our ministry; these *following reflections* will, I apprehend, naturally result from it.

1.) It will follow from hence, that *something more* is NECESSARY, to qualify a Person for the *ministry*, than *Learning*; or a *regular call* and *investiture* from Men, namely, *inclination* and *affection* to the work. Though we neither neglect nor despise *those other things*, yet in judging of *ministerial qualifications*, this of an *inward disposition* and *affection* appears as *essential* and *important* as *any other*¹.

It

¹ So much, I conceive, *the Church of England* admits, by that question which is asked of those who dedicate themselves

It may indeed be *abused* by forward Pretenders: who may possibly think they have a *right* to preach, because they have a great *inclination* and *desire* to do so. And are not the *best things* liable to be abused and perverted by the *weakness* and *jolly* of mankind? *Learning* and a *regular Ordination*, without a *love* to the Souls of Men, is as much an *intrusion* and *usurpation* on

selfes to the Service of the Church. It is in the *office* of *ordination* for *Deacons*, namely, *do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office, to serve God, for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people?* Answ. *I trust so.* I will not make my own reflections on this passage, but give the Sense of it in *Bishop Burnet's* words. “The true meaning of it, *says he*, must be resolved thus. The Motive that ought to determine a man to dedicate himself to the ministring in the Church, are a Zeal for promoting the glory of God, for raising the honour of the Christian Religion, for the making it to be better understood, and more submitted to. He that loves it, and feels the excellency of it in himself, that has a due Sense of God's goodness in it to mankind, and that is entirely possessed with that, will feel a Zeal within himself, for communicating that to others; that so *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*, may be more universally glorified, and served by his Creatures. And when to this, he has added a concern for the Souls of men, a tenderness for them, a Zeal to rescue them from endless misery, and a desire to put them in the way to everlasting happiness; and from these motives feels in himself a desire to dedicate his life and labours to those ends; and in order to them, studies to understand the Scriptures, and more particularly the *New Testament*, that from thence he might form a true notion of this Holy Religion, and so be an able Minister of it: This Man, and only this Man, so moved and so qualified, can in Truth, and with a good Conscience, answer, that he trusts he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost.”

on the *Pastoral office*, as the other. And let me add, many times, of *more* pernicious consequence.

A man *well affected*, with a moderate share of *Knowledge* and *Learning*, will have the pleasure of acting from *right motives*, and may be very serviceable to the interests of *practical Religion*; but a man of unquestionable learning and abilities, who enters the *Pastoral office* for *convenience* or *interest*, without this *affection* to souls, is not only wrong in his *motives*, but must be *cold* and *lifeless* in his *ministry*. If the heart is wanting, the man is wanting; his *publick Character* is forced, and his duty will be all against the *grain*. He will have little inclination to fill his post, and wanting such a *qualification*, cannot be thought a *Pastor after God's own Heart*^r.

St. Paul says, *he that desires the office of a Bishop*^r: i. e. he that is led to it by *inclination*, and *generous motives*. St. Peter describes the Christian Minister to be one, *that feeds the flock of God, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind*^t. And it is observable, that before our Saviour gave Peter a charge to feed his sheep, He asked him three times *whether he loved him*: reasonably *presuming*, that none were fit for this service, who did not love the *Master*, because none but such would cordially take care of his *interests*, and *Friends*.

You

^r Jer. iii. 15. ^t 1 Tim. iii. 1. ^t 1 Pet. v. 2.

You see this *inward inclination* and *desire* to promote mens eternal Happiness, is not a *qualification* accidentally mentioned; but expressly required in a *Minister*, by the *Author of our Religion* himself. They do not seem aware of this, that make *null* and *void* their Ministrations, who are not only inclined and willing to devote themselves to this service; but are sufficiently qualified with *Learning* and *Abilities*: who have been signally *owned* and *blessed* by God in turning many to *righteousness*. How *unkind* is it to invalidate their ministrations? When it is allowed, that *the unworthiness of Ministers cannot hinder the Effect of the Sacraments* ^u. And if *moral evil* in the instrument cannot, much less can an irregularity (*supposing it such*) in one ceremony of Religion, that of *ordination*. Especially if we consider, this one ceremony does not really make *Ministers*; but only *declares*, *notifies* and *makes publick* what is, as to the chief qualifications, already existing [†]. Besides the *Principle*, on which the validity of orders is sometimes founded, *viz. a lineal Succession derived from the Apostles*, must needs fill the minds of men with *endless scruples*, *distractions* and *fears*. For if this *Succession* should be at any time *interrupted* and *broken*, (and one would imagine that *Idolatry*, *impiety*, and *abominable wickedness* in the *Church of Rome*, through which we must pass, should make this *chasm*) it must leave us

D

in

^u Art. xxvi.

[†] See the *Publick Form* for Ordination of Priests, and the *Bishop's replies* to the Person, who presents them to him.

in great perplexity and confusion^w. But whatever men think of us, if we can approve ourselves

^w I speak with the greater freedom of the *indelible Character* and *lineal Succession*, because many of our *Conforming Brethren*, eminent for *Piety and Learning*, think no better of them than we do; as things absolutely incapable of proof, without a *certain Register*, or an *infallible Judge*; and which must unavoidably lead men into infinite Scruples: and even to doubt *whether* there are any *real ministers*, or any *valid Ordinances* in the *Christian Church* at this Day. JUDAS was in the *College of Apostles*, and if *once a Priest, always a Priest* be true, then nothing but death could obliterate his *Character*. The Scripture gives us quite another notion of the matter, and informs us that he lost it not by *death*; but *transgression*. That he might take part of this *ministry and Apostleship*, from which Judas by *transgression* fell. Acts i. 25. This shews that the *indelible Character* is a mere *Chimera*; for vice will effectually cancel and evacuate the *ministerial Character*.—I am very sensible *those points* have been sufficiently exposed. We know from what *quiver* such arrows are taken, even from the same, as the *Intention of the Priest necessary to the validity of Sacraments*. Those were the favourite topicks in those *REIGNS*, when *Popery* and *Arbitrary Power* were the objects aimed at—I sincerely desire the cessation of *Strife* amongst *Protestants*, which contributes only to *alienate* mens affections from one another, and *imbitter* life. And I cannot but wish the Rev^d. Mr. *White* had better employment for his *Time and Talents*, than to *beat* his fellow *Servants*, as he has lately done; and give vent to an *angry peevish* temper, especially when he seems to *know so little* of us, or our *Principles*. The *odious, and unjust* charge of *Schism* never fails to come into the lump of *Scandal*; but then *those Gentlemen* should consider, that the *Papists* charge *Them*, with the same things, with *invalid orders, ineffectual Sacraments, and damnable Schism*. We apprehend their defence of themselves against the *Papists*, will as truly vindicate us; for instance, Mr. *Chillingworth*, that *judicious, nervous and clear Reasoner*, thus very justly refutes the charge of *Schism*. “To the Second (the charge of *Schism*) God hath neither decreed nor fore-
told, that there shall be always a visible company of men
free from all error in itself damnable. Neither is it always
“ of

selves to God, as good and faithful stewards, we need not be discouraged. The important day is hastening on, when all Characters and pretensions will be tried; and to the last tribunal we appeal, with the Apostle, for justifying the uprightness of our intentions and views, in exercising our ministry. *With me it is a very small*

D 2

thing,

“ of necessity schismatical to separate from the external communion of a Church, though wanting nothing necessary :
 “ for if this Church, supposed to want nothing necessary,
 “ require me to profess against my conscience, that I believe
 “ some error, though never so SMALL and INNOCENT,
 “ which I do not believe; and will not allow me her Communion, but upon this condition: in this case, the Church
 “ for requiring this condition is SCHISMATICAL, and
 “ not I for separating from the Church.” *Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, Preface, and his answer to N. N. §. 43.*—Though a Church be not free from all error and imperfection, and Charity might incline me to communicate with that Church: yet if she makes it a term of her communion that I receive or approve such Error, then she lays me under a necessity, either of separating from her, or of violating my integrity. And when once a man can do this, violate his integrity, in a small matter, he is prepared to do it in any matter. Mr. Chillingworth here supposes the Error to be small, and innocent, but who must be JUDGE; whether it be an error at all, and of what importance? If the Church; then she will determine, that she requires no error; if the honest, plain Christian; then, whilst the error appears to him, he can, by his Separation, be guilty of no Schism. This, I apprehend, must be the issue of this controversy.—Would to God those altercations and debates were at an end! We are ready to honour the Piety and Learning of the Established Clergy; to give them the right hand of fellowship; and to wish them all Success in their ministrations. And, methinks, the ignorance, the corruption, the want of an inward sense and experience of the acknowledged Principles of Religion, too obvious amongst all denominations of Christians, should unite our Efforts to revive and spread Real Piety; and rescue immortal Souls from eternal Perdition.

thing, that I should be judged of you or of mans judgment.—For he that judgeth me is the Lord^x.

2.) It follows, should *Pastors* persecute men, and pretend to do it out of love to their Souls, it would be the most wicked, and monstrous abuse of their Character. The Persons, who constitute the bloody, and hellish Tribunal of the INQUISITION, are *Priests*. They pretend to regular orders, and mission from *Christ*, and yet destroy those for whom *Christ* died; they pretend *Charity*, when they are shewing the most astonishing cruelty; and authority too, when they are destroying the natural Rights of Mankind.

But neither their Mission, nor Orders, nor Authority can come from *Christ*. He challenged no such Power himself. He left no directions to any after Him, to set up Ecclesiastical Courts; any High Commissioner; any infallible Judge, to censure JUDICIALLY those who did not believe his Religion. So far was he from any such design, that he declares himself to quite a contrary purpose. If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, I adjudge him not to pains and imprisonments; I confiscate not his estate, or hurt him in his person, substance or life: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. Kindest Saviour, ever merciful, ever good! He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the LAST DAY^y.

When

^x 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

^y John xii. 47, 48.

When he discovered the *least tendency* to Pride and Persecution in his *Disciples*, He *rebuked* it ; and once with an exemplary resentment, *ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of.*

The thing in itself is highly absurd, to think, of *convincing* the Mind by reproaches, stripes, and blows ; of *propagating* Truth by the sword and flames ; of *forcing* Religion, which cannot be acceptable to God, unless it be *voluntary* and *free*. Any Cause, which needs such Supports as those, must be very *weak*, or very *wicked* ; or *both*.

3.) We may observe further, that the *ministerial office* involves in it a *Personal Obligation* ; and requires a *Personal attendance*, and *oversight*. There is no doing matters here by *Delegates* and *Proxies*. Every one is obliged for himself *to fulfil the ministry he has received*, and to give *diligent attendance to reading and prayer*, for that End. Neither can I remember that there is the least hint of *indulgence* to any, who are too *proud*, or too *lazy* to work in the *Lord's vineyard*.

A *Church* may, indeed, be too large for the care of a *single Person* ; or his *age* and *infirmities* may be too great for constant labour. *In that case*, he may call in *one*, or *more* to his assistance. But this will not destroy the *Relation* between a *Pastor* and his *People*. Still he is obliged to do what he is *able* ; to feed the flock of God ; to instruct, exhort and guide : he is still the *first in Relation*, and should consider himself as the *Principal* in duty. *Necessity*

cessity is laid upon me, said an Apostle, yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel^z.

Ordination is a solemn dedication of ourselves to God, and the service of his Church, and how can we be innocent if we do not live up to our engagements? *We must watch for souls, as those that must give account^a, not to Men, but to God; and would it be just to expect the reward, when we have not laboured; or hope to reap, where we have not sown*——So did not our Saviour excuse himself from duty, for *he went about doing good^b*. So did not St. Paul, who for the space of three years, *ceased not to warn every one, night and day with tears^c*. So did not Ignatius, who exhorts Polycarp to such a personal acquaintance with his flock, that he might *know them all by name^d*. They filled their Station; they courted not *ease and grandeur*: but were willing to *spend and be spent for Souls*, and so should we be affected.

4.) This qualification being so essential to a Gospel-minister, the Churches of Christ ought to have a principal regard to it, in the CHOICE of those, who are to minister among them. Not Friendship, not Party, not Interest should be the leading motives in this affair, but the glory of God, and the good of Souls. They should desire to sit under a convincing, searching, powerful Ministry. Their eye should be to one, that will deal faithfully and affectionately with them; one, that is likely to be most useful in promoting

^z 1 Cor. ix. 16.

^a Heb. xiii. 17.

^b Acts x. 38.

^c Acts xx. 31.

^d Epist. ad Policarp.

ing the ends of Religion, in saving himself, and those that bear him^e.

I make no more doubt of a People's^f right to chuse their own Ministers, than to chuse their own Physicians and Lawyers; and for the same reason, because they are to be at the expence; nay, and for a better reason too, because such a Constitution will bring Ministers and People into a closer dependence one upon another; promote an intercourse of good Offices; and excite ref-

* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

^f By People here I mean a Church, or single congregation, i. e. A voluntary Society of men, founding themselves on the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, delivered in the Holy Scriptures, as their GREAT CHARTER. Eph. ii. 20. Such a Society must be voluntary, because nothing deserves the name of Religion, but what is free and unforced. Such a Society has an inherent right in itself of chusing Officers; of managing circumstantial affairs; of making regulations and by-laws, not specified in their original Charter, in such manner as is consistent with the general laws of Christianity, and conducive, in their opinion, to decency, order ||, and CHARITY †.—No other Form of Church Government has, I apprehend, a Divine Right in it. Such a People, Church or Society, in all religious affairs, is Independant of any other Society or Church; and of every other Power whatever; but Christ Jesus, Lord and Head of his People.—Such a judgment of discretion; I conceive, belongs to particular Churches, as well as particular Persons; only with this difference, that the judgment of Churches is to be confined to such actions, circumstances and appointments, as are left by their Religion in a State of Indifferency. But no Church has authority to make new articles of Faith and new terms of Communion, which Christ himself never made; nor to impose their sense of, or authoritatively explain those Articles of Faith, and Terms of Salvation, which Christ himself has made; nor to adjudge or condemn to pains and penalties, those who do not submit to such their interpretations. Vid. Sermon entitled, *The Principles of Religious Liberty asserted, and the abuse of them disclaimed*, where those things are largely discussed.

|| 1 Cor. xiv. 40. † 1 Cor. xvi. 14.

respect in the *one*, and an affectionate concern in the *other*.

That the *People* sat in council; voted in the *Election* of Church-officers; gave their *suffrage* in spiritual matters, appears from the *New Testament* and the *purest Antiquity*—When *Judas's* place was to be supplied, the *Disciples* were consulted, and appointed *two*, *one* of which was to be determined by *lot*, to avoid the appearance of partiality, where the pretensions were so equal ^g.—The *People* sat with the *Apostles* and *Elders* in the *first council*, that was ever held in the *Christian Church*. They consented to the *decree*, that was then made; and their name is inserted in the *Title* of it. Then it pleased the *Apostles* and *Elders* with the whole Church, to send, &c. And wrote letters by them after this manner. The *Apostles*, and *Elders*, and *Brethren* send greeting, &c ^h.—The election of *Deacons* was by the *People*. And it pleased the whole multitude, and they chose *Stephen*, &c. Whom they set before the *Apostles*, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them ⁱ.—The messengers of *Charity* were appointed by the same authority. Who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us, with this grace ^k. Thus it appears from the *New Testament*; and I believe not *one instance* can be produced to the contrary for three hundred years after *Christ*, of any Person acting as a *Pastor* to any Church

^g Acts i. 15, 23, 25. ^h Acts xv. 22, 23. ⁱ Acts vi. 5, 6.

^k 2 Cor. viii. 19.

Church without their choice, suffrage, or consent¹.

But then, in using this Right, People should not be swayed by fancy, humour, or the influence of superior friends. Nobler motives should possess them. The design of the ministry, under Christ, is to promote universal holiness and happiness, and their aim should be to chuse one, who would be most likely to accomplish this design.—One whose ministry might awaken dead souls; enlighten blind minds; impress stupid consciences: shew men the evil and danger of their sinful ways; discover the symptoms of a carnal and spiritual mind, expose the variety

E

and

¹ And when they (Paul and Barnabas) had ordained them Elders in every Church, &c. In this passage no mention is made of the People's choice, but this, I conceive, is evidently implied in the force of the word χειροτονήσαντες, which is translated ordained. The word was made from the People's approving their Magistrates and Laws, by holding up their hands, at Athens. And hence the word came in general to signify, to chuse, to approve, &c. But when applied to popular assemblies, it is most natural to include in it, its original force. αἱ (sci. ἀρχαί) ὁ δῆμος ἐώθε χειροτονεῖν ἐν ἀρχαιρεσίαις, They call them Magistrates, whom the People use to declare so by Suffrage in their assemblies. Æschin. in Ctesiph. 7. ὅπως αὖν ἢ εἰρήνη ἐπιτελεσθῇ, ἢ ἐπιχειροτονηθεῖσα ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ, πρέσβεις ἐλέσθαι ἐκ πάντων Ἀθηναίων ἥδη πέντε· τὰς δὲ χειροτονηθέντας ἀποδῆμῶν, &c. That it pleased the Senate and People of Athens, to the end the peace, which was approved by suffrage in the first assembly, might be lasting, to take five ambassadors from all the Athenians; and that they appointed by suffrage should depart, &c. Demosth. de coron. 9. The same word is rendered to chuse. 2 Cor viii. 19. And therefore the translation of the Passage above should have included this idea in it, when they had constituted by suffrage Elders in every Church. So Erasmus, and Beza understood it; so Tindal translated it in his Bible, when they had ordained them Elders by Election in every congregation.

and *power* of temptations ; and shew both the *principles, ends* and *manner* which should accompany all their duties.—One whose ministry might establish them in *virtue* and *goodness*, and sow that *good seed*, which would spring up into an *harvest* of grace and glory : One that might lead them to see their *need of Christ*, his excellency and glory ; that might dispose them more and more to a right temper, till they had *the witness within^m* of the *truth* and *power* of Religion.—One, *finally*, that might *assist* them in their difficulties, *revive* them in their faintings, and *encourage* them against all their Fears.

Those are *dispositions* and *views* which should constantly influence a *People's choice* ; as most worthy the design of their *Christian Society* ; and most adapted to that *care* and *love* of Souls, which has been just now recommended. By such *piety* they would shew their *wisdom* in the best light, and prevent many *unfriendly surmises, debates* and *separations*.

5.) And lastly—By this character of a Gospel Minister it must appear that *Pride, Avarice*, and a *bad Life* are absolutely inconsistent with it.

First.—PRIDE ; *Pride* was not made for man, so poor, so indigent a creature. Such is its *malignity* that it will throw the *brightest name* into a shade, and *veil* great abilities.—*Pride* affects *distinction*, and *appearance* ; but will the man, *under this influence*, teach others to despise

pise the *pomps* and *vanities* of the world, and become *humble*, unless it be to pay a *base submission* to his *dictates* and *authority*?—*Pride* affects *distance* and will be accosted with *cere-
mony*: but is this the Man, to whom the *poor
doubting soul* can apply, and open his case *freely*?
—*Pride* affects *power*, and expects a defer-
rence should be paid to its opinion and judg-
ment; but is this the man, who *will preach
Christ Jesus LORDⁿ*, supreme Head and Govern-
our in his *Church*; or contend for the *Liberty*
of Christians from every *yoke*^o? We can, cer-
tainly, expect nothing from a *proud Minister*,
but that he should *love prebeminence^p*, and *Lord
it over God's heritage^q*.

Secondly.—*AVARICE* in a *Minister* will
have as bad an influence. Is he not to call men's
thoughts from *earth* to *heaven*? Is he not to ex-
pose the *glittering temptations* and *snarcs* of life;
but with how little Effect, when it appears that
the *world* reigns in his own heart, and his *ca-
pacity* of doing good is directed by his *interest*?
The most *rational*, the most *heavenly* and *sub-
lime* discourse must lose its *energy* upon *others*,
when it has no influence upon *ourselves*. It is
a truth founded in universal experience, that
Ministers can never *preach up*, what they them-
selves *live down*.

The *Apostle Paul* severely censures both *pride*
and *covetousness*, and very justly; because *the*

E 2

one

ⁿ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

^o Gal. v. 1.

^p John Epist. iii. 9.

^q 1 Pet. v. 3.

one was not fit to follow an humble master; nor *the other* to inculcate an heavenly Religion.

Thirdly.—A BAD LIFE; this of *all other things* is the most *opposite*, and the most *dishonourable* to the *Pastoral Care*. How can we possibly imagine that he should have any real concern for the salvation of *others*, who has none for his *own*? In every view a *wicked minister* is a hurtful, pernicious creature. Whatever *superior advantages* he possesses; whatever *popular forms* of *orthodoxy* and *zeal* he affects, it is all tarnished and polluted by his *vice*.

A *wicked minister* is hurtful to himself.—He must lose the satisfaction of a *good name*, as he is *out* in his own profession^r, and prostitutes a *sacred Character* to mean Sensualities.—He must lose the pleasure of a *good work*. He will be exposed to *other men's* censure; but most severely to his *own*. He engages in a work, that puts a *force* upon all his inclinations, and necessarily obliges him to make *disagreeable reflections*. He performs duties which must be his *aversion*, and recollects truths, which will give him *secret pain*. Every time he declares the *judgments of God* against sinners, he reads his *own doom*, and the thought must necessarily recoil with some terror upon himself. There can be, *certainly*, no *quiet* in such a situation, but what results either from a *dead formality*,
or

^r —Sic philosophus (*sic Jesu Christi Minister*) in ratione vitae peccans, hoc turpior est, quod in officio, cujus magister esse vult, labitur, artemque vitae professus, delinquit in vita.
Cic. Tusc. ii. 4.

or an *atheistical contempt*.——He is most likely of all men to lose *his own* soul. He is proof against conviction, and his heart remains *insensible*, whilst he is urging the usual *motives* and *arguments* of Religion. And having acted the *part* of a confirmed *Hypocrite*, he cannot avoid his dreadful *portion*: even the lowest Hell.

A *wicked minister* is hurtful to his *People*. If he falls, he will not fall alone; but draw others into the *same condemnation*.——They will suffer by his *example*, which usually draws more powerfully than *instruction*, and spreads a general infection. *Like people, like priest*^t.——They will suffer by his *unskilfulness*. He that undertakes to be a *Minister*, before he is a *Christian*; and to recommend *truths*, that he has no *taste*, no *relish* of, will never make a *workman*, that *needs not be ashamed*^t. A *Minister* does not save men by his *Orders*, any more than a *Physician* cures his patients by his *Diploma*. There must be an *aptitude* and *fitness* in the instruments, God makes use of. *They are apt to teach*, and *study to approve themselves* both to God and Man, *rightly dividing the word of Truth*.——They will suffer by his *unfaithfulness*; for such a person will be under the strongest temptations to *corrupt the word of God* and *handle it deceitfully*^u. The effect of vice is always to confound the distinctions of *Good* and *Evil*; and retire from the *light*^w. And as, *in this Case*, some form of Religion must be kept up, the objects

^t Hof. iv. 9. ^t 2 Tim. ii. 15,—24. ^u 2 Cor. ii. 17.
iv. 2. ^w John iii. 19, 20.

objects of *Superstition* or *Bigottry* will be eagerly embraced, to supply the place of true Religion. The *Shibboleth*^x of a party will be pronounced with great exactness and propriety. *Foolish questions, and endless genealogies*, and such like things, foreign to the business of *saving mens Souls*, will be dwelt upon. And what must the *consequence* be, but that things of great moment, *the weightier matters of the Law*^y should be neglected; and *love and good-will* be rooted out of the hearts of men, to make way for *strife, bitterness and a proud zeal*. No doubt is to be made, but *a wicked man*, whatever his *Character* be, will chuse to converse with *such objects only*, as shall be *least offensive* to his lusts.

Upon the whole, it must follow, that a wicked minister; of *whatever Party*, is the *most pernicious, the most contemptible* creature in the whole world. He can have *no Authority* from *Christ*; it being impossible He should ever intrust an *enemy* with the care of his Interest: he deserves no countenance from his *Church*; it being unreasonable to expect his blessing, under such an influence, when publick and known. *They shall not profit this people at all*^z.

I cannot see, *the least apology* can be made for such a *Character*. Our *Saviour* intended no such thing, when he said of the wicked *Scribes and Pharisees*, *they sit in Moses seat, all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works*†. His
mean-

^x Judg. xii. 6. ^y Mat. xxiii. 23. ^z Jer. xxiii. 32.

† Mat. xxiii. 1, 2.

meaning is not, as *Origen* seemed to understand it *, *mind what wicked ministers preach; but not how they live.* He had quite another object in view, when he said this. *Moses* himself was no *Ecclesiastical Person*, His seat was the seat of *Justice*, and those in it constituted a *Civil Court*. *Scribes* and *Pharisees* ^a were laymen as well as *Priests*; and though *Priests* were found in this *Court*, yet they did not sit there *suo jure* in their own right, but as other laymen did by *Election*. Our Saviour's meaning therefore is, “ if wicked men are intrusted with *civil power and authority*; if they impartially administered *Justice*, and preserved publick peace and order, they should obey them as *Magistrates*, but not imitate them as private men.”

In fine, a wicked minister has, and can have, no mission, no authority from *Christ*. That passage disrobes him of both, *to the wicked*, *God says*, *what hast thou to do*, who called thee, who sent thee, *to declare my statutes*, or *that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth* ^b. Though a wicked man should assume this *Character*, he can have no right to it; for as *Cicero* reasons of a corrupt and wicked citizen, “ a man's being in a place will give him no right to be there, when

* Homil. in *Ezechiel*.

^a The *Pharisees* were a *Sect*; and the *Scribes* a profession of men following literature. And, as *Dean Prideaux* observes, generally all, that were any way learned among the *Jews*, were in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles called *Scribes*. *Connect.* ii. p. 343.—*Vid.* *Cunaeus de Repub. Hebr.*

^b *Psal.* l. 16.

“ when in the due execution of laws, he ought
 “ to be some where else.”

The

“ Omnes scelerati atque impii, quorum tu te ducem esse profiteris, quos leges exilio affici volunt, exsules sunt, etiam si solum non mutarunt.——Non igitur ubi quisque erit, ejus loci Jus tenebit; si ibi cum legibus esse non oportebit. Cic. parad. 4.

The concern which I have expressed above for preserving the *moral Character* in the ministers of Religion is no more than is *necessary*; and what, *I conceive*, all denominations of Christians should assert in the *strongest manner*. Neither would I be thought to *insinuate* any thing, but what naturally results from the nature, design, and ends of the *sacred function*. I know of *no Church*, and *no Age* but have shewn the same concern, and in as strong terms, as I have done. The *following Instances*, of the many which might be produced, will abundantly prove this, viz.

Irenaeus says, *We ought to withdraw from those Presbyters, who serve their own lusts, and have not the fear of God in their hearts, &c.*——Presbyteri, qui serviunt suis voluptatibus, et non praeponunt timorem in Dei cordibus suis, &c. ab omnibus igitur talibus abstinere oportet. iv. 44.

Cyprian gives us the judgment of a Synod upon the case, *The people must not flatter themselves, as if they could be innocent, in communicating with a wicked Priest.* And afterwards, *wherefore the people, in obedience to God's command and fear, ought to separate themselves from a wicked ruler, and not concern themselves in the religious acts of a sacrilegious Priest.* Since they especially had the power of *choosing worthy Priests, and of refusing the unworthy, or wicked.* Nec sibi plebs blandiatur, quasi immunis esse a contagio delicti possit, cum sacerdote peccatore communicans.——Propter quod plebs obsequens praeceptis dominicis, et deum metuens, a peccatore Praeposito seperare se debet, nec se ad sacrilegi Sacerdotis sacerdotia miscere; quando ipsa maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos Sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi. *Epist.* 68.

The Church of *England* requires *Testimonials of the good life and conversation of Candidates*, Can. 34.——In the Title of one of her Articles she says, indeed, *the unworthiness of the Ministers cannot hinder the effect of the Sacraments.* But then this can only mean *that unworthiness which*
 is

The Close.

Thus, *my Brethren*, I have urged that *Principle*, which, *I conceive*, should animate all our Services. I have used great *freedom*, but then *faithfulness* required it, and you know the pleasure of that thought in all our ministrations, *though Israel be not gathered*. What I speak to you, I would speak to *myself*; and desire it might be impressed on my *own* heart, as well as *yours*. In things of *everlasting concernment* nothing so *necessary*, nothing so *desirable* as to have things fairly represented. It is what we

F

do,

is secret and unknown; because it follows in the end of the same article, *nevertheless it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that enquiry be made of evil ministers; and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences, and finally being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed.* Art. 26.

Bishop Bull affirms, *the Priest that is not cloathed with righteousness, though otherwise richly adorned with all the ornaments of human and divine literature, and those gilded over with the rays of a seraphick prudence and sagacity, is yet but a naked, beggarly, despicable creature, of NO AUTHORITY, no interest, no use, or service in the Church of God.* Visit. Sermon. 27.

The present Bishop of London observes, *that Ministers are to be considered as God's Ministers, and to be received and respected under that character unless they forfeit their title to Respect, by living unsuitably to their Character.* In which case, I am very far from recommending them either to your love or esteem, since I know it is impossible for you to pay either; there being no person so truly the object of Abhorrence and contempt in the sight of all good men, as a minister of the Gospel, who by his irregular life renders himself unworthy of his Function and Character. Pastor. Let. i. 81.

do, or should do, in acquainting our *People* with *their* obligations; and we should be as willing to know our *own*. We should all desire to understand things as they are in the *word of God*; just as they will appear at the *last day*. To *deceive* ourselves in those things by a *careless Examination* of our Religion, or an *implicit following* of others, is as *foolish*, as it is *dangerous*. If we have failed in our *duty*, it behoves us to enquire whether we have not first failed in our *principle*; *love to Christ and the Souls of men*. If we have neglected to give *warning* of danger; or *press forward* the great ends of Religion. If we have *mised* any by holding out *wrong lights*; or giving an *ill example*. If this is the case, it becomes *us* to be *very humble*, who have *more souls* to account for, than our *own*. If our *consciences* bare us a different testimony, we should rejoice in our *integrity*. Beg a *coal from the Altar* to revive the *spark of love*, and raise it to a *flame*. Ask of God his *holy Spirit*, to form our tempers more and more to our work; to give us both *inclination* and *success* in it: which, I doubt not, is the height of your *ambition* in this world, as it will be the *crown* of your happiness in the next.

You, that are our *People*, will see *the manner*, in which we devote ourselves to *Christ* for the service of your *Souls*. It is by *Prayer*, with *imposition of hands*. *Imposition of hands* was an ancient ceremony, and, among other views, used in appointing a person to a particular office || ;
as

as such we use it on this occasion. In the *New Testament* it was generally accompanied with some *extraordinary divine gift* ; but we disclaim every such *pretence*, and would not be thought to convey any *secret character* or *grace*. By those solemnities we desire to commend our *Brethren* to *God's blessing* and your *Esteem*. We take this way, and in this *publick manner*, to testify our approbation of such Persons ; *that we judge them able and faithful Men ; and make known that they take part with us in this ministry*. You see our work is great, and our labour constant, that we do not *bind heavy burdens*, and *grievous to be born*, on your *Shoulders*, whilst we *excuse ourselves*^d. You see our *principle* has a favourable aspect upon you and your *interest*. We should esteem it our best recompence, our noblest reward, to see you *walking in the Truth*, and growing continually in *Faith and Virtue* : to see you improving in every branch of *Practical Religion*. It is an *easy matter* to be religious, so far as a *profession*, and a form of *Zeal* and *Knowledge* can carry us. But to subdue our corruptions ; to command our passions ; and digest the truths of *Religion* into the very *frame* and *constitution* of our minds, this is the *difficulty*, this the *labour*, that will require our united Endeavours, and Prayers.

You of this Church have chosen him to be your *Pastor*, on whose account we are met this day. From a long acquaintance, I have had with him, I can commend him to you as one,
that

that will sincerely care for your state, and be solicitous to promote the great design of Real Religion among you.

Enjoy all your privileges with *diligence and thankfulness*. This is your *accepted time*; this your *day of Salvation*. Remember you are *accountable* for all your advantages; remember this *day has an evening*.

When *He* comes to you, may it always be *in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ^e*; and under his ministry, *I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and all judgment, in a solid, rational, and effectual profession; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ—being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God^f*: which we beseech Him to accomplish through Jesus Christ our Lord.

• Rom. xv. 22.

^f Philip. i. 9,—11.



T H E E N D.

Error of the Press.

Page 6. Notes, l. 3. for Meditation r. Mediation.

